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10 April 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director, CR

SUBJECT : Subject Cataloging of Books in CIA Library.

REFERENCE : Final Report on Cataloging of Books, Task Team No. 9, (OCR)
26 March 1958, p. TTR/9-3.

1. Problem

To determine whether subject cataloging of books might be terminated by CIA Library.

2. Background

One of the assumptions on which OCR's Cataloging Task Team based its report reads as follows: "...the CIA Library will continue to give ... books subject cataloging".

This paper cites discussion among librarians to the effect that the case for subject cataloging is no longer conclusive. The question arises whether CIA practice is abreast of that of progressive libraries? Secondly, CIA appears particularly favorably situated in the matter of access to the resources and services of the Library of Congress and other Federal libraries. This paper asks whether the CIA cataloging operation can take fuller advantage of this circumstance. Thirdly, available evidence is limited and inconclusive concerning the needs of intelligence analysts for subject access to books and concerning their habits of use of externally produced subject guides to books. If, as proposed here, these matters were carefully investigated and the need for CIA provided subject access were found to be small, a substantial reduction in CIA cataloging costs could be effected.

The Task Team on Cataloging assumed in its report that CIA subject cataloging should continue under its proposed reorganization pending answers to the questions raised above, particularly in the matter of analyst requirements. In addition, it does not appear possible at this time to evaluate the effect of the CIA move to suburban quarters on analyst and library staff use of Library of Congress vis a vis CIA Library subject card catalogs. Finally, subject cataloging for intelligence purposes could also be classed as a variety of research insurance the cost of which might well be considered minor in relation to intelligence objectives.

3. Discussion

A. The utility of subject cataloging.

Felix Reichmann in an article on Costs of Cataloging, pp 290-317, Library Trends, October, 1953, cites an investigation of the use of the subject catalog at the University of California which arrived at the following conclusion:

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"...if subject cataloging were to be dropped for all foreign books and for all English books more than twenty years old, subject-cataloging load would be reduced immediately by 65%. The efficiency of the subject catalog in terms of books circulated with its help would progressively decline to a level not lower than 80 per cent of its present effectiveness." p. 312.

Application of this proposition to CIA Library would involve the following:

- (1) Determination of the proportion of foreign books to the total flow of books through Cataloging Section, CIA Library, in order to establish the costs involved.
- (2) Measurement of the probable effects of termination of subject cataloging of English language books.
- (3) Acceptability, as one substitute for a subject catalog, of browsing among books on CIA Library shelves arranged according to subject.
- (4) Effect on utility of the central book collection of CIA's book procurement policy which supports the maintenance of local collections for specialists and which therefore may reduce the use by analysts of a central library subject catalog.
- (5) The effectiveness as substitutes for CIA subject cataloging of (a) national and specialized bibliographical services regularly maintained in CIA Library, and (b) the subject catalogs maintained in other Federal libraries, in particular, the Library of Congress. (cf. also, discussion in following paragraph).

Conclusions on these points might well be based on selective experiments in which all of the books received from a given national or language area would be stored and retrieved for a test period without provision of a subject catalog.

B. Use of resources and services of other Federal libraries in lieu of subject cataloging of books in CIA.

Much could be done to define the role of the Library of Congress and other governmental libraries, present and potential, in support of intelligence community research. Two types of services are involved, namely: (1) printed bibliographical publications which can be purchased and maintained in CIA Library, and (2) facilities in the given library to which CIA Library staff or the researcher can be directed.

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- (1) Assuming that CIA Library maintained an author/title/added entry card catalog and arranged books on its shelves according to the Library of Congress classification, the following subject guides would be used in lieu of a CIA subject catalog to identify books dealing with the given subject:

Library of Congress Catalog - Books: Subjects.
(published in three quarterly issues, annually and quinquennially)

National Union Catalog - a cumulative author list.
(published in 9 monthly issues, 3 quarterly cumulations, annually and quinquennially)

Monthly Index of Russian Accessions (MIRA)
(published monthly by the Library of Congress)

East Europe Accessions List (EEAL)
(published monthly by the Library of Congress)

National and Special Bibliographies
(available from many countries and for many subject fields; many are published at short intervals and cumulated on an annual or longer-range basis.)

The time lag between publication of the book and its listing in a bibliography available in CIA Library might justify compensating measures in some cases, e.g. CIA's receipts of Russian and Bloc books might be indexed in the MIRA and EEAL under arrangements that sent each new book to the Library of Congress for this purpose on a deadline basis. The index cards from these two operations might be filed in CIA Library by subject on a cumulative basis.

- (2) CIA Library has arranged each year for several hundred intelligence analysts to work at the Library of Congress and to enjoy special privileges in the use of study rooms and access to book stacks. This service may be expected to continue substantially unchanged in the future. It would appear to remove a substantial portion of the need for maintenance of a subject catalog to the partial and limited holdings of similar publications in CIA Library.

CIA Library has maintained a staff member at the Library of Congress for some five or more years to handle inter-library loan matters and has sent reference staff on a near daily basis to do bibliographical searches in Library of Congress catalogs. This too has clearly reduced the use of CIA Library subject

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cataloging. It does not appear logical to argue that this has resulted exclusively from inadequacy of the CIA Library catalogs because these represent a new and evolving current intelligence collection, not the definitive collecting in all subject fields practiced by the Library of Congress for the broadest research purposes.

It should also be noted that CIA borrowing of books from the Library of Congress amounts to 6,000 or more books per year. This rate would certainly not be reduced by the elimination of a CIA subject catalog. The extent to which it might increase would have to be estimated by experiment as proposed in paragraph 3 A. Inter-library borrowing of books already in the CIA collection would not ordinarily occur assuming proper use of the CIA author/title catalog.

C. Analyst use of subject guides to books.

The observations to be made here are a good deal more tentative than in the matter of availability of substitutes for a local subject cataloging operation. They are derived from a brief examination of certain recent CIA-produced intelligence monographs and their bibliographies. In certain cases it was noted that the bibliographies contained few or no references to foreign literature, e.g. Polish economic studies in the Polish language, even though the REAL, for instance, listed a variety of recent publications of seeming relevance to the CIA monograph.

One contribution which might be obtained from analysts would be a regular evaluation of the current national literature on the given subject to be incorporated in the monograph along with the bibliography. If, as may now be the case, or as such evaluation would indicate, the national literature does not warrant exhaustive treatment then, again, the case for subject cataloging of books by CIA Library is reduced.

Recognizing that the languages concerned may be a barrier to analyst use translation assistance would be required and could be measured as further indication of the general problem of gaining access to open literature. No attempt has been made here to determine the present rate of translation of books by CIA or as obtained from outside translators. In the part this activity has been reported to be very small.

What is proposed here is a case by case examination by the librarian and the analyst of the problems of open literature retrieval and of the climate in which the analyst operates with respect to identifying and ordering new open literature, influencing the selection policies of the CIA Library, maintaining local open literature collections, utilizing Library of Congress and other definitive collections, and performing

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literature searches with the help of printed bibliographies and card catalogs. From such investigations might come assumptions acceptable to research offices and helpful for OCR planning purposes concerning:

Level of language competence among analysts.

Relative emphasis in the given research field on use of prime source materials as compared with source materials generated by U.S. observers.

Staff and time allocated to exploitation of prime source materials.

Standards for the use of open literature in finished intelligence studies.

4. Conclusions

Subject cataloging of books acquired by CIA Library is clearly not the exclusive instrument upon which the intelligence researcher relies to gain access to open literature. There are many avenues of subject access to open literature of varying quality, cost, and effectiveness and in some cases involving duplication of effort. Any program to introduce more orderly arrangements and to economize CIA subject cataloging costs must be based on better knowledge of intelligence research requirements than is now available.

5. Recommendation

That discussions be held at the appropriate Division, Staff and CRAG levels to plan the suggested studies and experiments in the organization of open literature by CIA Library and its use by analysts.

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